

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

Be Ready, He is Coming For Us

By Rev. Hudson Taylor, China. Inland Mission

[p.23]

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity—or love—shall cover a multitude of sins." - 1 Peter iv. 7, 8.

The Apostle brings before us a solemn but a blessed truth. "The end of all things is at hand." To those whose eyes are open to see the trend of things it is not a sorrowful thing, for things are not getting better and better. It is a very solemn thing to know that there are

MORE UNSAVED SOULS TO-DAY

than there were a century ago. This is sometimes called "The age of missions." But when Carey first went to India, there were fewer unsaved heathens than there are to-day. What is the state of things on the Continent and at home? The churches are not keeping pace with the increase of the population. There is no doubt we are living in a favoured part of the world. With all our sins and sorrows there are probably more true Christians in this little island of ours than dwell upon any other portion of the world's surface. But we are not overtaking the increase of the population, even in Britain. Therefore, when I see these words, "The end of all things is at hand," I am deeply thankful. Our little day of service is soon passing away; but there is something better than the service of the Church. There is the Master Himself coming. Where there is a large family, it does not do for the head of it to be away for any lengthened period. It is necessary for him to return to put things right. Does not the Church need the Master to come and put things right? Is it not a very gladsome thing to know that He is coming soon, and that every heart will be glad to meet Him when He comes into the air. It is a very solemn thing to those for whom He is nothing. It should stir us up to the greatest earnestness.

The Apostle brings this before us in order to stimulate us in the performance of our Christian duties. He says, "Be sober, and watch unto prayer." "As every man has received the gift, even so, minister the same." See that your work is getting forward, and that

YOUR BOOKS ARE IN ORDER,

for the end may be very soon. This chapter seems to be based upon this fact, the end is near. It is very striking to look through the New Testament and see how the coming of the Lord is the great motive and stimulus that is set before us for the life of practical holiness. Each one of the Apostles in his writing brings this forward. You remember how Paul appeals to the Lord's coming in many passages, and very notably in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and also in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, and elsewhere, how in his appeal he refers to the coming of the Lord as the great incentive to holy living. If we read the writings of the other Apostles, we find the same incentive. If the Lord is really coming very soon, is it not a very practical motive? People often tell me that such a hope, such a belief, would cut the nerve of missionary effort. I do not find it so. On the other hand, I know no motive that has been so stimulating or more practical to myself. I remember when this truth was first brought before me as a medical student. It did not take a long time to make a very practical effect on me.

I WENT THROUGH MY BOOKSHELVES,

and sold and gave away a good many of the books. My wardrobe was not a very extensive one; but, when I thought that the Lord might come at any time, I soon saw that I could reduce it, and I did so. If the Master should come to-morrow, may I have my house in such order as I should like Him to find it. If this were really an operative motive it would stimulate more really and more truthfully than anything else that I know. It has been my duty more than once or twice to leave my dear wife and children alone whilst I have gone out to the mission field. I cannot tell you what a practical joy it was to me to feel that I might not have to wait until I returned from China to meet them again. I thought that the Lord might come even before I got to China, and then I knew that I would meet my loved ones in the air. We are told to comfort one another in our bereavement, when we see the earth closing over those more dear than life, with the thought that the separation may be only for a little while. They are safe with Jesus, and at any time the re-union may come, and we shall all be with the Lord. Oh, yes, it is a very practical hope, and I would urge upon all to see to it that it be kept practical, and not made merely a subject for discussion. Where this hope is really held, it is a cleansing, a purifying hope; a blessed hope, in the best sense of the word; a stimulating hope, an encouraging hope.

I presume that all, or nearly all, who read this paper are familiar with this hope, but some may read this to whom the hope of the Lord's return is either

A NEW SUBJECT

or one they have not given deep consideration to. I would like to say to such that, in reading the prophetic parts of Scripture, you must be careful to note the distinction between His coming to take up the Lord's people into the air, and His coming with those that have been caught up in the air to deliver His people who will have gathered in Jerusalem, and to bring judgment to the earth and righteousness. It leads to great perplexity and confusion in the minds of people if they do not clearly discriminate between the difference in the Lord coming for His people and the Lord coming with His people. If we are to come with the Lord and the tens of thousands of His saints we must be gathered to Him, and that is the great hope for the Lord's people now. There are

TWO CLASSES OF PROPHECIES.

One class is connected with coming judgment, and marked by varying signs which are to precede and usher in the period of judgment. You will find that all the prophecies of this class refer to the Lord coming with His saints. As to the prophecies which refer to the coming of the Lord for His people, I believe there is no event put between the believers and the coming of their Lord. The Church has had this hope set before it for many centuries, and if it was a joyful hope to them so very long ago, how much more so should it be to us now. What can we do to hasten the coming of our Lord? We are quite sure that He will not come to an incomplete bride. We are quite sure the number of His elect will be complete before He comes; and, as we do not know where this elect is to be found, let us be earnest in every effort that may win souls to Christ, and that may stimulate those who are members of His Church to put on their beautiful garments, and become as men who wait for their Lord. I think in this way we shall do what in us lies to hasten the coming of the Lord. What a glad day it will be to some of the Lord's people to find that he or she has been the means of winning the last soul for Christ—the one for which He has been waiting. The moment when that one is brought into the fold the Lord will collect

his saints, and will go forth to meet his people. Will it not be a privilege to bring in the hour of His joy and the consummation of our own blessedness. We frequently hear the remark that history repeats itself. There is a good deal of truth in it. Before the destruction of Jerusalem the Lord gave His people

VERY SOLEMN WARNINGS

against worldliness, and He told them to make friends of the unrighteous mammon, and told them to sell what they had and give alms. Some carried this advice to such an extent that prudent people, no doubt, thought they were going beyond reason. Some of them sold their houses. Who were the losers?

A little time later Jerusalem was surrounded by armies, and the opportunity was given to the Lord's people to escape. It was a very short opportunity. They had the Master's warning, when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies, to take the opportunity when it presented itself. Those who were on the housetops were not to go down into the houses to take away anything and those who were in the fields were not to return home. Who were the losers? Those who had so many treasures behind that they went and tried to rescue some of them, and, perhaps, lost their opportunity to escape. There is a similar day coming in which it will be impossible to make friends of unrighteous mammon. There is a day coming in which there will not be a chance of leaving a loved home for the purpose of carrying the Gospel to the heathens in foreign lands. All of us should say, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' We ought to go wherever He may send us, or stay as He may direct us.

We want to have nothing between our souls and our Master, if He may come at any time. If I am living in the attitude of the man who only waits for the Lord, it makes very little difference whether He comes to-day or to-morrow or at a later time. Waiting for my Lord, He will not leave me alone. As the Lord reveals Himself to me to my heart, and the heart is gratified and satisfied with the only satisfying portion—Himself—whether He delay His coming a few days more or whether He comes speedily, it makes little matter to me. If I am left here

IT IS FOR HIS SERVICE

and to do His will, and if He calls me home it is far better. If we are living in this spirit, the difficulty that presses upon so many vanishes at once. You often hear the inquiry, Is not Africa or China or India unhealthy? Some of those countries are not so unhealthy as some people think. I have spent nearly forty years of my life in China, and I am stronger now than when I went. But really it does not matter to me whether this place is healthy or unhealthy. The question is, does the Lord want me there or here? There are some converted people who would not go to heaven if they could help it. If we really love the Lord, and if heaven is really our home, and if the Lord would be pleased to accept from me ten years of service in China instead of twenty years in England, would I not be the gainer by ten years, for I should get home ten years earlier. If our heads are right with Him, it settles many difficult questions. When the Lord's people are willing to become little children, they will find that the Bible has many sweet things for them.